

## **Policy 609 RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL OBSERVANCES**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to identify the status of religion as it pertains to the programs of the Northfield School District.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

- A. The district shall neither promote nor disparage any religious belief or nonbelief. Instead, the district encourages all students and employees to have appreciation for and tolerance of each other's views.
- B. The district also recognizes that religion plays a significant role in the social, cultural, political, and historical development of civilization.
- C. The district recognizes that one of its educational objectives is to increase its students' knowledge and appreciation of music, art, drama, and literature which may have a religious basis or origin as well as a secular importance.
- D. The district supports the inclusion of religious music, art, drama, and literature in the curriculum and in school activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience and is presented in an objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- E. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of various religions, holidays, customs and beliefs shall, if used, be explained in an unbiased and nonsectarian manner.

### **III. RESPONSIBILITY**

- A. The superintendent or their designee shall be responsible for ensuring that the study of religious materials, customs, beliefs and holidays in the district is in keeping with the following guidelines:
  - 1. The proposed study or activity must have a secular purpose.
  - 2. The primary objective of the study or activity must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion.
  - 3. The study or activity must not foster excessive governmental relationships with religion.
  - 4. Notwithstanding the foregoing guidelines, reasonable efforts must be made to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from a curricular activity for a religious observance or American Indian cultural practice, observance, or ceremony. The district must provide annual notice to parents of this policy.
- B. Outside Speakers. Outside speakers are permitted in accordance with [Policy 644](#)

Guest Speakers. Speakers may present informational and historical information about religion, but will not proselytize. The staff member in charge should advise each speaker of Policy 609.

- C. The superintendent or their designee is granted authority to develop and present for school board review and approval directives and guidelines for the purpose of providing further guidance relative to the teaching of materials related to religion. Approved directives and guidelines shall be attached as an addendum to this policy.

## Policy 609 Religion

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### Board of Education

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 659

Northfield, Minnesota

#### **Legal References:**

U. S. Const., amend. I  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, Subd. 12(⊕) (Compulsory Instruction)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence from School for Religious and Cultural Observances)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.10 (Moment of Silence)  
*Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, 533 U.S. 98, 121 S.Ct. 2093, 150 L.Ed.2d 151 (2001)  
*Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. V. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 120 S.Ct. 2266 (2000)  
*Tangipahoa Parish Bd. Of Educ. V. Freiler*, 530 U.S. 1251, 120 S.Ct. 2706 (2000)  
*Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S.602, 91 S.Ct. 2105, 29 L.Ed.2d 745 (1971)  
*Child Evangelism Fellowship v. Minneapolis Special Sch. Dist. No. 1*, 690 F.3d 996 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir.2012)  
*Wigg v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist.*, 382 F.3d 807 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2004)  
*Doe v. School Dist. of City of Norfolk*, 340 F.3d 605 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2003)  
*Stark v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 640*, 123 F.3d 1068 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1997)  
*Florey v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist. 49-5*, 619 F.2d 1311 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1980)  
*Roark v. South Iron R-1 Sch. Dist.* 573 F.3d 556 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2009)  
*Child Evangelism Fellowship v. Elk River Area Sch. Dist. No. 728*, 599 F.Supp.2d 1136 (D.Minn. 2009)  
*LeVake v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 656*, 625 N.W.2d 502 (Minn. App. 2001)  
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-J (Feb. 14, 1968)  
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-K (Oct. 21, 1949)  
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 63 (1940)  
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 120 (1924)  
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 121 (1924)

#### **Cross References:**

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 801 (Equal Access to School Facilities)